

PERSPECTIVE

As the Juvenile Detention Profile Survey progresses, trends will become more evident. The ADP remained virtually unchanged during the two years of the JDPS, which was 11,437 in 1999 and 11,529 in 2000. The juvenile detention system may be experiencing the same artificial population cap as the adult jail system, which is established by the overall BRC. As construction on a number of juvenile facilities proceeds, funded by state and federal monies, perhaps the ADP will rise to meet the capacities established by additional BRCs. Currently, 34 juvenile detention facilities are under construction or are planning construction that will add beds to the BRC. Additionally, \$131.7 million will be available for juvenile construction projects in 2001.

Despite these efforts to build capacity through new construction, renovation and replacement, bed space demands continue to outpace available local juvenile detention facility capacities. This has occurred even though the counties have implemented many alternatives to confinement programs. This is due in part to the growth of California's general population, but is also due in large part to the condition of the existing juvenile detention facilities in California.

The majority of California's local juvenile detention facilities are 30 or more years old, significantly dilapidated and in need of replacement or major renovation. Most of these facilities were designed for low-risk offenders, such as incorrigibles and truants. There were not designed for (and many do not have necessary secure bed space to safely confine) today's high-risk serious juvenile offenders. This Survey shows that over 60% of local juvenile detainees now have felony charges, and over 50% of the total juvenile facility population are adjudicated minors serving court commitments at the local level.

These are very different juvenile offender characteristics than the ones in place when most of the existing juvenile detention facilities in California were designed, and despite the significant effort underway to build new facilities and remodel current facilities to successfully handle this new high-risk population, this population currently far exceeds the system's capacity to handle it. Even taking into account the beds being brought on line under the current construction funding programs (many of which are replacing dilapidated, non-functional beds), the juvenile bed shortfall at the local level in California is expected to exceed 2,300 beds by 2002 with an additional need to replace 1,570 dilapidated beds.

Average lengths of stay in juvenile halls increased from 22.5 days in 1999 to 27 days in 2000. This is a significant increase and compounds the capacity issue described above. The BOC will closely monitor these numbers in the coming year. Even a slight increase in average lengths of stay can negatively impact a juvenile detention facility and, if this is a trend, local juvenile detention system administrators will need to prepare for the increase load on their system.

Mental health needs of juveniles in detention continue to increase and affect the entire system. Without adequate mental health services, the problem of caring for juveniles who have mental health needs could increase exponentially. The BOC has partnered with local juvenile detention administrators to investigate methods to better measure the mental health needs of juveniles in detention and will be modifying the Juvenile Detention Profile Survey in order to track the new information.

Overall, the data indicates that factors affecting juvenile detention systems have remained fairly stable between 1999 and 2000. Capturing more years of data will be necessary to illustrate a meaningful long-term picture of the state of juvenile detention systems in California.